

11 July 2001

To the City of Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission:

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. I strongly support the recommendations put forth by the Planning and Public Works Departments.

I am Dr. Svata Louda. My professional training includes a Bachelor of Arts in Economics, a Master of Science in Biology, and a Ph.D. in Ecology. I have worked in both regional economic development and environmental biology. My current position is Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Nebraska -Lincoln. My professional expertise is in the ecological interactions that underlie the functioning of natural communities, such as prairies.

I am also a resident and property owner in the east beltway study area. The land that my husband and I own, much of which he and his family have farmed for generations, will be affected, directly or indirectly, by any of the proposed alternative routes. **However, one route is clearly the least damaging and the most consistent with the goals and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan, that is the proposed East Middle Beltway route.** Thus, my purpose is to support of the recommendations made to you by the City/County Planning and Public Works Departments for the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Specifically, based on my experience in economic development and in environmental studies and on my understanding of the data available, I strongly recommend a **denial of amendment No. 94-63 (inclusion of the East Far Beltway, between 134th and 148th) and an approval of amendment No. 94-64 (inclusion of the East Middle Beltway, between 120th and 134th).** The East Middle Beltway route would be the least damaging to people, farmland, historic properties, and natural resources.

The facts that lead to this conclusion are straightforward, and they have led an experienced staff, and the majority of the community, to decide that the proposed East Middle Beltway route would be the most consistent with planned development of our community over the long term. Briefly, what are these facts?

**The East Middle Route, compared to the East Close or East Far Routes, conforms to the Comprehensive Plan most effectively by providing:**

- the most efficient new truck route around Lincoln (without any "back-tracking")
- the most economic practical route, once the local cost of connecting roads is added
- the most potential for a multi-use corridor
- the least number of homes to be confiscated
- the least noise impacts
- the least visual impacts
- the least impact on the most historic farms (including the nationally-recognized Stock Farm)
- the least farmland confiscated
- the least cropland removed from production
- the least amount of wetland impacted  
[when a 1.5-2 acre wetland on the East Far route omitted from the DEIS is included based on vegetation: north of Van Dorn, between 134th and 148th, making the total acres by route: 41.8 on EC1; 21.8 on EM1; 21.9-22.4 on EF1]
- AND, the least destruction of remnant tallgrass prairie

The destruction of tallgrass prairie is of special concern to me, and to many people in Lincoln. Unfortunately, the value of the remaining tall-grass prairie, and the trade-offs among the routes, were not well explained in the DEIS.

Exhibit 6  
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Tallgrass prairie is THE most endangered ecosystem in the continental U.S. Less than 1% of the original tallgrass prairie remains. So, it is my opinion that a case could be made that local tallgrass prairie remnants have a status under the law, specifically under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as terrestrial resources of local, national, and international significance. Thus, a federally-funded project that does not minimize destruction of, and damage to, the remaining pieces of this endangered ecosystem is likely to be challenged, under NEPA, if the east beltway project ends up in court.

**The East Far Beltway route would:**

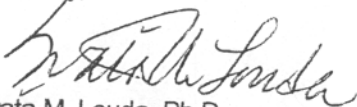
- directly impact the greatest number of tallgrass prairie remnants,
- destroy the most acres of tallgrass prairie, and
- directly and indirectly harm THE ONLY PIECE of tallgrass prairie rated as "IN GOOD CONDITION" within the East Beltway Study area  
[Reed Prairie, east of Prairie Home between 134th and 148th Streets]

**These facts provide yet another reason to accept the Planning/Public Works Departments' recommendation, specifically denial of Amendment No. 94-63 (inclusion of the East Far route as consistent with the Comprehensive Plan).**

In summary, it is my opinion that the Planning and Public Works Departments have done an excellent job, and that they have provided you with the best recommendations on the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

I would be happy to discuss any of these issues further with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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